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16 May 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: NIE 11-7-55: Soviet Cross Capabilities for Attack on the US and Key US Installations and Forces Overseas as of Mid-1955 and Mid-1958

BACKGROUND

1. This estimate is prepared annually in response to the needs of the "Net Evaluation Sub-Committee of the National Security Council". Its scheduling was noted by the IAC on 13 January 1955 (IAC-D-1/10, Item 10) as a revision and extension of NIE 11-7-54.

SUBSTANCE

2. In brief, this estimate concludes that the USSR will probably rely chiefly upon nuclear attack by aircraft in any attack against the US and key overseas installations and forces. In general, the present capabilities of the USSR for such attack, while considerable, are restricted by range limitations of long-range aircraft, probable lack of inflight refueling, and the relatively undeveloped state of bases in forward staging areas. The capability for attack will be greatly enhanced by 1958 due to the introduction of numbers of new long-range bombers in operational units and a more adequate and flexible stockpile of nuclear weapons. The USSR also possesses capabilities for other means of attack, including nuclear attacks with guided missiles launched from submarines, clandestine employment of nuclear weapons, and attacks by conventional forces.

3. All of the agencies are in general agreement with these conclusions although there is considerable difference of opinion as to the probable magnitude of such attacks. OMI does not believe there is sufficient evidence to justify indicating a finite number of aircraft that could be launched from forward bases in an initial attack in 1955. (See paragraph 10 of Conclusions and tables on pages 53 and 55 of text.) Because of this difference of opinion, a separate

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special intelligence annex (which is being transmitted under separate cover) on capacity and characteristics of airfields has been prepared by the IMAF as a reference only for IAC discussion in the event of disaster. It is recommended that this special annex be used only for the IAC discussion and that it not be considered for publication as an annex to this estimate, although ONI may possibly so recommend.

b. Specific paragraphs of this estimate upon which a reservation or possible footnote by individual agencies was indicated, are as follows:

- a. Paragraph 10 of Conclusions: This may be footnoted by ONI and possibly by JIC and C-8 on the basis of insufficient evidence to justify the actual numbers or the capacities of forward bases.
- b. Paragraph 38 of Discussion (Table): ONI will probably take a footnote to the figures for mid-1958 in the table on page 18. This is for the reason that they do not believe there is sufficient evidence to warrant an estimate of exact numbers of aircraft by type.
- c. The tables on pages 53 and 55 will probably be footnoted by ONI on the basis of inadequate intelligence upon which to estimate on base capacities.

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